

Remarks

Claims 1-3, 5-13, 22, 26-33, and 35-37 are pending in the application, with claims 1, 22, and 31 being the independent claims.

Based on the following remarks, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn.

Statutory Double Patenting Rejection

Applicants and the undersigned would like to express their appreciation to the Examiner for the opportunity to discuss this rejection by telephone.

In a telephone call between the Examiner and the undersigned on November 5, 2003, the statutory double patenting rejection was discussed. It was agreed by both parties that the double patenting rejection should not have been a statutory double patenting rejection, but instead should have been a non-statutory double patenting rejection based on obviousness. This agreement is documented in the Interview Summary mailed on December 5, 2003 (PTO Paper No. 18). According to the Interview Summary, independent claims 1 and 31 were discussed. However, Applicants and the undersigned assume that independent claim 22 is also covered by the reached agreement.

Therefore, based on the agreement reached in the telephone call of December 5, 2003, Applicants respectfully request that the Terminal Disclaimer filed with the Amendment and Reply of June 4, 2003, be accepted and that the claims be passed to allowance. A copy of the Terminal Disclaimer filed on June 4, 2003, is included herewith for convenience. Please note that the Terminal Disclaimer was filed to obviate a double

patenting rejection over pending U.S. Patent Appl. No. 09/098,041 (filed June 16, 1998), which became U.S. Patent No. 6,650,327 on November 18, 2003.

Other Matters - Drawings

FIG. 5 has been expanded onto three pages to meet current drawing requirements. FIG. 5 now encompasses FIGs. 5A, 5B, and 5C. The specification has been amended accordingly, and formal drawings reflecting this are included herewith.

Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of objection and rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn. Applicants believe that a full and complete reply has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Reply is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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